

# SERMON TRANSCRIPT

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SPEAKER

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Grace Unleashed

PART

9

TITLE

We Are Reconciled

SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 2:14-16



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Good morning, and thankful to have the Church family here at Providence. And if it's your first time with us at Providence, we're grateful to have you here as well. And my prayer for you is that this would feel like family to you, and that this would feel like home. It's a sweet place, and this is how God's word describes the Church, is that it's a family and it's a home, and so I hope it feels that way for you this morning.

We've been going through the book of Ephesians as a Church for the last several weeks, so if you have a copy of God's word you can go ahead and turn to Ephesians, chapter two. If you don't have a copy, there should be one in the chairs in front of you, underneath them, and we'll be on page 977 in that Bible. There's 66 books that make up one Bible, and we're looking at one book specifically today, the Book of Ephesians and chapter Two.

And if you've missed a couple weeks or you're just not familiar with the Book of Ephesians, I'ma do a quick recap for you, catch you up because we're about halfway through chapter Two now. But in chapter One, you see this beautiful start where the author, Paul, writes and basically says this is a whole treasure trove that you have in Christ. And he goes through this list of what we have in Jesus as Christians; a lot of amazing things, a lot of beautiful things that he mentions here.

And he moves through this section of praising God for what he's given us, to just thanking him and praying. So he prays for us to know his immeasurable greatness and to see him more clearly at the last part of chapter One. And then chapter Two, there's a real familiar verse for a lot of people; the one that reminds us how we have been saved, and it's by grace that you have been saved through faith. That's what it says here in chapter Two; it says, "But God, being rich in mercy, saved us with his great love and his grace." That's beautiful.

And then here we are right here in the second half of Ephesians, chapter Two, where we looked at last week. The only command that's given in the first three chapters of this book is found in the last half of chapter Two, and this is the command to remember. We looked at it last week. To remember, that's the command that we have is to remember. Which is interesting because that's really what Christianity is all about. First, it's not about doing all of these works so that we are saved, but rather it's remembering who we were and what Christ did for us to save us.

And so it's a beautiful picture that we find here in Ephesians, and then the last half of this book is all about now that Christ has saved you, this is how you live. So a beautiful book, and we're going to look specifically at chapter two, verses three through 17. Let me read the word of God before we talk about it.

First, 13: “But now in Christ Jesus, you who were once far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he, himself, is our peace who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility by abolishing the law of commandments expressed in the ordinances that he might create in himself one new man in the place of two, so making peace. It might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility. And he came, and he preached peace to you who were far off, and peace to those who were near.” Let’s pray.

No matter where you are in your spiritual walk, just take a moment right now and pray that God would speak to you this morning. And take a moment to pray for me, that I would speak God’s beautiful word clearly this morning. God, you are great and powerful and mighty, and you are also good and loving and gentle. So Lord, today we ask that you would speak clearly, and that Lord we would hear from you today. It’s in Christ’s name we ask this. Amen.

All right, so today marks a big day. There are 50 days until Christmas. 50 days, and all the kids are excited, yes! And all the parents are like I got time; it’s fine I got time, 50 days. We got plenty of time. I went down to the mall this week, and they already had the Christmas decorations up at the mall down here. It’s unbelievable. 50 days. We haven’t even hit Thanksgiving yet. But with this, every time the holidays come around, I hope and I look forward to that time just hoping to get a little R-and-R, right; a little rest, a little reprieve. Let’s just take a deep breath and relax a little bit.

But the reality is, a lot of times when we go into the holiday time what we find is more strife and more conflict than we even thought about. Just this last year, my family and I, my extended family, they were having discussions about who’s coming to Thanksgiving dinner. And it’s like okay, we don’t want that person to come but we want these people to come, and we want to make sure that person’s there, we’ve got to have space for that one. And we’re going through this whole debate, and everybody’s doing phone calls and texts about like, okay, these people and not these people. There’s just all this strife, and I’m like my goodness, if we can’t rally around deep fried turkey and mashed potatoes, there’s no hope for us. There’s no unity we’re going to have here.

But the reality is, we see hostility and conflicts in our families, but it’s not just in the holidays and it’s not just in families. We also see it when we look at the news, and when we pull up the internet we see conflict and hostility all around the world. There’s one website that I looked at, that literally tracks conflicts all around the globe; it’s the Council of Foreign Relations. And they have this map, and on this map they literally have marks of all the big conflicts going on in the world. And just this last week, I pulled it up to look at it, and it was updated just this week, and there’s 28 world conflicts going on right now; huge world conflicts. 28 of them.

And some of them are civil war conflicts, and some of them are racial conflicts that are going on. All this division and strife and hostility that we find in our world, it's there; we see it, we know it. And what I love about this text that we read is it doesn't ignore this hostility or conflict, it addresses it. And what I love about this text is how relevant it is because what it does, this text agrees with what we see and at the same time it speaks hope to what our hearts long for. It agrees with what we see around us in this hostility and conflict, and then it speaks to what our hearts long for most, so I love how relevant it is.

And the first thing that we need to see is this hostility in this text. This is a theme that we see here. Twice it's mentioned in here; if you look back with me, verse 14, at the end of it, it says, "There are dividing walls of hostility." And then in verse 16, it says, "Therefore, killing the hostility." There's conflict, there's strife, there's hostility. This text is pointing it out. And the reality is, this hostility and conflict is true for us now. It's true for Paul when this letter was written, but it goes back all the way to the beginning when man fell and sin entered into the world.

Think about it. Adam and Eve sinned and they have multiple kids, and two of their kids, brothers Cain and Abel, end up having conflict between each other. Right? Conflict enters into the world and it doesn't stop there, it just continues to snowball over and over; gets bigger and bigger and bigger. And so Hagar and Sarah have strife together. You've got the Jewish people struggling with the Gentile peoples, and this is in the Bible. You turn the pages, you see King David over the Jewish people having strife with his kids over who's going to rule. There's strife and there's conflict. The Bible doesn't deny it; it actually speaks to it. And it says if you want to know the root of this conflict, the root of this issue that we're seeing, this hostility, it's our sin. We have to see this in this text today, that our sin builds walls of hostility. Our sin builds walls of hostility.

Now this text talks about hostility in terms of distance. If you look back, you'll see in verse 13, "But now in Christ Jesus, you were once far off," this is a picture of hostility, "and you have been brought near." In verse 17 it says, "He came to preach peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near." So hostility is seen in this distance that we have from God. Now what is he talking about here when he says, okay, you're far from God? Last week we looked at it, but if you look back at verse 12, there's a description that's given. And he says, "Remember that you were at one time separated from Christ. You were alienated. You were strangers from the covenant promises, having no hope and without God." This is what it means to be far from God. You're isolated, you're alone, you're without hope and without God.

Some of you here, I read that and you're like I see those as much more than words on a page. Like, I feel that in my heart. Like I feel that I'm far off. Some of you came in here and you thought, and I look around the room and I'm like I'm not like these joyful Christian bubbly people that are bouncing around. That's not me. And if they knew what I did last weekend, they certainly wouldn't want to talk to me. And I said open up to the Book of Ephesians, and you thought I don't even know what Ephesians is, or what this book is. So you're like, yeah, I think if I was going to use a word to describe myself, some of you here today would say far from God sounds about right. Far from God probably does describe me.

Or maybe some of you here grew up in the Church and so you know the lingo, but the reality is at some point you chose to run from God. So now you look back at the Church with a sense of fear of like I'm so far from God now; I know what it's like to be there, but I'm not there anymore and I don't know if I can go back. Some of you all have that weight, and I want to give you hope today because this text says the same hope that saves those who are near is the same hope that would reach out to those who are far. Christ came to preach good news, the Gospel, to those who are far off, and also to those who are near.

Now those who are near, it looks a little different but the reality is they still need Christ. Those who would be, quote, "near" are those that would know every book of the Bible. They might know a really catchy song that they could sing through and get all the books of the Bible in order, or they could sing and give you the fruits of the Spirit in some kind of catchy song. They know all these facts. They could rattle off all the 12 disciples and name them, and they know all these facts and these truths about the Bible, and about the songs, and about Jesus, but yet Jesus has not gripped their life.

Jesus hasn't changed them yet. They don't know Jesus, they know facts about Jesus. And if you're not careful, those that are near to God take these facts and these truths that they know, and they build this wall which they feel like is a safe haven. They're building this little home for themselves, this castle, with these truths that they know. But the reality is, is they don't know God. What they're building is their own prison. They're near because they know these truths and facts, but they're so far from God because they're trusting in their knowledge or in their works instead of in Christ Jesus.

There's one American author, Flannery O'Connor, she writes about one of her characters in her book. This is a man who is running from Jesus, and this is how she describes him, which is really interesting. She says of this character, "He has already had a deep, black, wordless conviction in him, but the way that he avoids it, the way that he avoids Jesus, is by avoiding sin." What? The way that he avoids Jesus is by avoiding sin? What does this mean?

What this means, what she's trying to say is there's a lot of people who do a lot of good things thinking, okay, I'm good enough, now I don't really have to bow my knee to Christ. I want Christ to be somewhere on my radar, on the periphery, but I don't want Christ to be the ruler of my life. And so as long as I'm good enough and I can rub off some of this guilt that I have, then I'll be fine. I won't really have to bow to Jesus. I won't really have to give Jesus my bank account, or my hopes or my dreams. I'll be okay. I'll just avoid really bad sins and in that way I can avoid Jesus.

That's what he's talking about when he says those that are near but those that don't know Christ, and he describes it as hostility for both of them. This is what hostility looks like for both groups, those that are near and those that are far. And then when do we know it's hostility, is in verse 16. In verse 16 it said, "And he might reconcile us both to God through the cross."

He might reconcile us both? Who are the both? Those that are far from God and those that are near to God, both need to be reconciled. Those that are Gentiles and those that are Jews, both need to be reconciled to God. Now you don't reconcile friends, right? If people have a good relationship, there's no need to reconcile them. But when there's strife and there's hostility, that's when there needs to be reconciliation. And he looks at those that are far and near, and he says both of you need to be reconciled to God through the cross. Both of them need to be saved.

Now this is good news, Church. This is such good news because the Gospel didn't just come to those that were near to God. It looks and it comes to those that are far. The Gospel didn't just come to those who are good people and not bad people. We're all bad and we all need the Gospel. It came to all of us. It came to the rule follower and the rule breaker; it came to the clean and it came to the dirty. The gospel of peace has come to us, that this problem that we have with God, this conflict that we have with God, the conflict that we have with God could be solved through the cross and through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Those that are far and those that are near must be saved through Jesus Christ. Both need to be saved through Christ Jesus.

I will never forget my first retreat when I was here at Providence. I'd only been on staff for a couple months and we were taking a retreat down to Ft. Caswell. If you haven't been there, it's off of Oak Island. So we're at the beach, and we thought we were going to have to cancel it because there was a hurricane that was off the coast. But it stayed far enough off that it didn't rain on us or storm, but instead we had wind and waves, like really strong wind and really big waves.

And so, one of the guys on our trip was like this is a great time with the wind and the waves to get our ... Let's go kite surfing. And if you're not familiar with kite surfing, it's literally a surfboard that you strap yourself to and a kite, and you can sail across the water, you can jump out of the water. So the two guys went out and decided to do this, and what they didn't realize is with wind and waves also comes undercurrents. So these guys get out there on the water and it doesn't take long ... and one guy fights as hard as he can and he gets back into the beach. And as soon as he gets into the beach, he yells to the rest of the guys that are there and says call the Coast Guard now because the other buddy of mine, he's being swept out to sea.

So they call the Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard comes to look for this guy. And they're searching; you look out there and there's helicopters, and they had boats and they're searching for this guy. We were waiting on the beach hoping that we'd find this guy. And an hour goes by, then two hours go by, and all they've found at this point is his kite and his board, and they haven't found him. And I remember at that moment thinking, man, I don't even know how we're going to start this retreat tonight when this man has been swept so far out that we can't even find him.

When we see this little boat come in, a little small rubber boat that's coming in, it's coming fast towards us on the beach. And it runs up onto the beach, and we see the guy from our group on that boat. And he gets off and they put him in an ambulance, and they take him to the hospital to make sure he's okay. He was actually back that night for that session, and I'll never forget talking to him about it because he said, "Man, I was swept out so far that I'd just gone ahead and said 'this is it.'" The Coast Guard found him eight miles off the coast, eight miles. And he said, "I'm laying there in the water bobbing up and down, and I see the boats and I see the helicopters, and they don't see me. And I wonder am I too far gone? Are they going to be able to rescue me?"

Now why I share that story is the truth of that story is whether he was eight miles off the coast or 20 miles off and was drowning, both would need to be saved. Right? Whether he was eight miles or 50 feet, he would need to be saved if he was drowning. And the same is true for us. Whether we're far off from God, whether we've been carried away by our depravity in the depths of our sin and wickedness and were far from God, or whether we're in the shallows of our immorality playing around in sin, Christ came to save both of us. And that is good news, Church. That is good news for us.

Because as he saves us, what he's doing is he's breaking down this wall of hostility, this conflict that we have between God and us. And if we don't get that hostility, that wall broken down then it's going to affect our relationships with each other. Our sin is going to affect relationships with each others; our vertical relationships are not right, our horizontal relationships will be off as well. And that's the second type of conflict that we see in this passage, is that there's conflict between man and man. There's conflict between each other.

We talked about it some last week that there's people actually arguing about circumcision and religious acts, and they're saying we're more holy and pious than you are, and so there's strife there between the two of them. There's strife between the Jews and the Gentiles, and let's be honest, up until this point in Scripture the Old Testament, salvation is mainly, mainly gone out to the Jewish people, a race of people. And then Jesus comes on to the scene and he starts preaching this program of 'who soever will' and then all these people start coming in that are Gentiles with the Jews, and there had been a little bit of that in the past but now it's just heightened.

So you've got two different classes of people, two different races that are coming together and they have different pictures of how we should dress, what we should eat, what we should wear, what Church should look like, and so there's strife in the Church as Paul writes through them. And it hasn't changed, right? Two thousand years later, we still have this struggle, right? We still have this strife. And Jesus speaks to both of them about breaking down the walls of hostility. That's what he says in verse 14, that Christ in his flesh breaks down the walls of hostility.



Now this is a metaphor that Paul is using at this time, and it's a good metaphor. We can all think of busting down a wall, but it was extremely vivid for the people in this time because there was a literal wall in the temple that separated different people. You had walls that were like, okay, the Jewish people are a good, clean race, so you guys are here; and then the Gentile people, you're way over here because you're far from God. So you can still come in, in the vicinity, but you have to be on this side of the wall. You can't come any closer.

And on that wall, this 10-foot high stone wall, it says this and I quote, "Any Gentile entering beyond this wall will have only himself to blame for his ensuing death." Any Gentile entering beyond this wall will only have himself to blame for his ensuing death. So when Paul says Christ came to break down this wall of division, oh, they knew what that wall looked like. It was a visible wall with a sign on it. Now the reality for us is maybe we're more politically correct today so we don't have signs like this anymore segregating our races, but the reality is that we have these signs or these walls in our minds and our hearts. When we look around and we divide ourselves from others, and we build these different walls. And it might be race. It might be black versus white, or Hispanic versus Asian. It could be that. But we also build these walls of political issues. I do not want to hang out with a Republican, or I just cannot hang out with a Democrat. We make these walls.

Or maybe it's educational, where I've just studied and I'm extremely smart, and so I just cannot hang out with people who just joke all the time and they can't think as deep as I do. So we create these walls of division over and over again. It could be walls of just success. This person doesn't make as much money as I do, so they don't dress as well as I do, they don't look as good as I do, and so I put these walls up in our lives. And what we're doing is we're creating dividing walls of hostility within the Church.

But what Paul is saying here is that Christ has torn down those walls of division so there's no more good people or bad people, winners or losers. Rather, there are only sin-sick rebels, children of disobedience without God and without hope in this world. This is huge because Christ has made that ground level for us, that all of us are sinners in need of a savior.

This is revolutionary at this time. You've got to think about this. Paul says these words, "Christ has broken down the walls of hostility," and there's still a wall in the city with this sign, No Gentiles Here; you can't come past this wall. And Paul was like yeah, yeah, yeah, that wall that you see, this physical wall? It's gone. And what's beautiful about that is that's what God sees. In his eyes, no matter if there's still a visible wall in our society or there's walls in our minds, in front of God they are all gone. It is all level ground because Christ came to break down these walls of division. And Church, we are called to do the same thing; to break down these walls of division.



There's one man I feel like reflects this best, and Dr. John M. Perkins is an amazing example of breaking down these walls of hostility; amazing example of reflecting Christ. John Perkins was a civil rights activist, and in the '60s he was actually arrested after taking part in a protest for civil rights. And that night when he was in prison, he was beaten by racist white police officers. And this is his words, he said, "In the moment where that's going on, I realized," and this is what he said, "I realized the absolute necessity for reconciliation." He said, "I saw the depths of racism and I prayed to the Lord I want to preach a gospel that reconciles black and white and Jews and gentiles, together in one body." And he has given his life to that.

He actually co-wrote a book called *He Is My Brother*. He co-wrote this book with a former KKK member. And some people were like, whoa ... John, you've got this line right here where you're really fighting for civil rights. We're for that, we get that. But you're going to write a book with an ex-KKK member? Whoa, we don't want to cross that line. And they're asking him why are you doing this, and he says, "That's because of what Christ has done for me. Christ has broken down these walls and Christ has saved this man who used to live this way. And now together, we're brothers and that's what the book is about. We're brothers in Christ because Christ has broke down this wall of hostility between the two of us.

The world should look at the Church and ask why? Why do you love each other like you do? How is there a unity here that we can't find anywhere else? Just like they're asking Dr. Perkins, they should be asking us why would you do this? And it's because we love, because Christ first loved us. Christ first loved us. He shows these walls of division in his life and his ministry, and he broke them down then. Jesus' disciples, you had Matthew, a tax collector, and Simon, a zealot, hated each other and yet Christ broke down those walls of hostility.

You had Nicodemus, who was a religious man and a Samaritan, who was a woman caught in adultery, and both of those walls are broken down before Christ. And what we all have in common is Jesus Christ has saved us. We are sinners in need of salvation.

Now many of us are going to hear this and read this text, and agree with everything in here. We're going to say, "Yes, we agree that these dividing walls need to break down. Yes, we see these issues." And then we're going to walk out of here and do nothing different in our everyday lives, and the reason being is because it's difficult. Jesus knows it's difficult. It cost him his very life to break down these walls. It's difficult for us because I believe our identities are so far rooted in our political beliefs or our education or our race that we tend to let these things become our idols and our everything. So when anybody talks about these things, it's a huge struggle for us to separate it from ourselves. And I think that's why Paul, when starts the Book of Ephesians, as he writes to the leaders, he's like I want you to know who you are. I want you to know your identity in Christ.

So in chapter one, he goes through this list of what we have in Christ. And he says this is your identity; if you're a believer, you are considered faithful in Christ. Chapter one, verse one. He says in Christ you are blessed. You're seen as holy and blameless whether you feel that way or not. verse five, you are adopted into his family. You are redeemed and you are reconciled. You are rich in Christ and you're secure in Christ. This is our identity for those who are in Christ Jesus. This is who we are. This is our foundation. And the beauty of this is it never changes. We were saved by grace, and so it's not our works; so we've been given all these things through God's grace and not our works. So even if we mess up by our works, we can't lose this. It's in Christ. This is our identity. If we're wondering who we are, this is our foundation for those who are believers.

Now I want you to hear me clearly. I don't want there to be confusion. I'm not saying that since we have all these things in Christ that, okay, now there's no such thing as race and there's no such thing as education and there's no such thing as wealth, and that these aren't real dividers. Because these are true things, and honestly when Christ comes again, it says that every race, tribe and nation will praise him. So there's race even into eternity. What I'm saying with this is that who we are in Christ is foundational to everything else in our lives. This is primary and everything else is secondary. We build our foundation on who we are in Christ, and this allows us to speak in and live in every area of our lives in a way that glorifies Christ. This is what Christ does for us and this is what he's called us to do.

I said at the beginning that one of the things I love about this text is that it speaks and agrees with what our eyes see around us; that we see this conflict. But it also gives us hope and what our hearts long for. And what our hearts really long for is peace, and that's what Christ does. He breaks down these walls of hostility and he gives to us peace. Four times in these few verses he talks about peace. verse 14, he says he himself is our peace. In verse 15 he says, so making peace. And then twice in verse 17 he says I preached peace to you. I preached peace to you.

He doesn't just look at the world and say there's so much conflict, you guys deal with it. He looks at our world and our hostility and Christ says I came to give you peace, that you would have rest. Now for us, oftentimes we think of peace and what we think of is like that tropical scene, where I'm sitting in a hammock and I'm just drinking a drink, and watching the sun set over the water. Maybe that's what we think about. We think of this place. My sister actually lives in the Dominican Republic, and every time I call her I joke with her; I'm like, "Hey, how's paradise down there?" She's like, "This is not paradise, trust me. I've lived here long enough, it's not paradise. It has some great views, but there's not true peace here."

And so we always joke about it, and the reality is that we so often think of peace as a place. If I could just get to that Hawaiian island, or we think if I could just get to retirement then I'll hit this sense of peace that the heart has always longed for. And this passage tells us that peace is not found in a place, it's found in a person. Look at verse 14 "for he himself is our peace." Christ is our peace. It's found in a person and not a place.

In the Old Testament as you read it calls God these really tangible terms; he is our strength, not that he just gives us strength; literally that he is our strength. He is our refuge. Wait, he's literally our refuge? He just doesn't give us a refuge? Yes, it's found in him. Now this can be one of those spiritual things that's out there, like what are you talking about; what do you mean when you say that? I think a really tangible way I saw this last week is I went trick or treating with my kids. Got three kids, a three-month old, almost a three-year old, and then a five-year old. And my middle child, Reese, if we go trick or treating, he's a little nervous when we get to the different houses. He doesn't necessarily want to rush up to the porch.

Whereas my daughter on the other hand is an extrovert, so she's like a caffeinated bee in a garden; she just [buzzing] hit all the houses as quick as possible. So my son is pretty smart and he starts to think if she's so excited about this, maybe I'll just give her the bag of candy and let her go up to the door and get the candy for me, so I can just kind of sit back and let her go do that. He's the plotter, right?

So I look at him, I'm like, "Son, you've got to go up to the houses because you've got to ask for candy, and you need to say thank you to people that actually give you candy." And he's just a little worried and a little nervous to go up to different houses, and let's be honest, I'm looking at some of these Halloween decorations and I'm worried, too. I'm like, "Bro, ain't no candy worth the nightmares I'm going to have from that house. Let's just skip that one and move on to the next one."

So I tell him you've got to go up to these houses, and he says, "Dada come?" I was like, "All right, buddy, I'll come with you." And so we start walking up to every door together, and he's holding the bag, and they put candy in there and he says thank you, and he starts to have fun. He's starting to enjoy this in his little Buzz Lightyear outfit. He's zooming around from house to house now with his dad.

Now why is he more comfortable, and why is he peaceful in this moment? The situation hasn't changed. The houses are the same. It actually got darker and colder out there. The difference is, is that his father is with him. There's a sense of peace because I am walking with him. And when it says here that Christ himself is our peace, that's what he wants us to feel; is to know that no matter what our situation is, whether it gets better or whether it gets worse, whether we are getting married one day or whether we remain single, it does not matter. We can still have peace in that situation even if it never changes because it's found in a person and not a place.

And I love that Christ isn't just our peace that is with us through all circumstances, but he's our peacemaker. He makes peace, and it says it multiple ways through here. In verse 13 it says, "You're brought near by the blood of Christ through his sacrifice on the cross." And it says in verse 14 that, "In his flesh, he's broken down the walls of hostility." And then in verse 16, "Through the cross, he has killed hostility." Christ is the peacemaker because of his life and his death and his resurrection.

We can have hope and peace. And in verse 17 it says that “Christ came to preach this peace to you.” Preach this peace. And he did that from the moment he was born. At Christmastime, you might hear that ‘peace on earth and good will to men.’ That’s pointing to the Bible verse that says when Christ was born peace was on earth; that Christ brought peace to us from God. And even at his death on the cross, he brought peace. He was the peacemaker. When he hung on the cross and he died, he said “Father forgive them, they know not what they do.” Christ has brought peace to us. And when he was preaching one time, he looked at his disciples and he said this, “Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.”

I think partly Jesus is talking about himself there, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” He is the peacemaker, and he is the perfect son of God. But then he looks at you and he looks at me, and he says blessed are you if you’re a peacemaker because you can be called a son or a daughter of God. Because what we’re doing when we make peace is we’re reflecting our father. Reflecting God when we make peace. This is something that we should strive after as the Church, to break down these walls of hostility and to make peace.

Now at the Church, I oversee the young adults’ ministry and so I’ve done a lot of premarital counseling with different people, and you see how different people react to conflict. One couple I loved, they said the only way we can deal with conflict is we go into separate rooms and we text each other what we want to say. Because if we say it face to face, we’re just going to say things we wish we could take back. So we go in there and we text each other, and then we delete it after we realize I shouldn’t say that and delete it. I’m like okay, if that’s what works for you to break down these walls and deal with your conflict, then that’s great.

For me, as I look at my life I can remember a time where I was so fearful of conflict that I just wanted to run from it. I just don’t want to be around it, so if I’ve got a problem with somebody I’m just going to avoid them. I’m not going to respond to a phone call or an email. And then God gripped my heart one day when I was reading this book by Ken Sandy, and it was talking about peacemaking. And he says there’s two extremes: he said some people flee from any kind of conflict, and so they just avoid it at all cost; and then the other extreme is that some people aggressively tackle conflict and it makes war. He says we, as the Church, need to be in the middle of that; where we don’t run from conflict, we walk to conflict and address the issue, bringing about reconciliation. And this is what gripped my heart. He said when we do this, we’re reflecting Christ and what he did for us.

So now I don’t look at conflict as an inconvenience in my life anymore. Instead, I look at it as a way that we can reflect Jesus Christ and how he came to seek and to save that which was lost. So for us, let us practice the gospel by intentionally working to reconcile broken relationships with one another. Let’s not wait for somebody to come to us to fix the relationship; let’s go to them. That’s what Christ did. He didn’t sit on his throne and say you guys work your way up, and once you’re good enough then I’ll talk with you. No, he came down to earth to fix a broken relationship.

Let us preach the gospel intentionally because as we share the gospel with one another, what we're doing is we're breaking down the hostility that man has with God. And both of which reflect what Jesus Christ has done for us. Let's pray.

Father, you are good to us that you would send your son, Jesus Christ, to take on the hostility for us, to break down those walls and to paint us a picture of what it looks like. And yes, Lord, it's difficult, but I pray that you would give us strength through your holy spirit, that Lord we would live differently because of it. And Lord, I ask that you would give us a sense of peace as we walk through this strife in this world, and that people would ask us how do we have this peace. And we know, Lord, it comes from you and from you alone. Amen.



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